Avis du
Conseil du statut
de la femme

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BRIEF ON THE IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY STATEMENT

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On December 4, 1990, the Minister of Cultural Communities and Immigration tabled before the National Assembly the Statement of the government's policy on immigration and integration entitled *Let's build Québec together*. This document deals with the main development challenges facing Québec in the years to come and the role of immigration within this perspective.

The Conseil du statut de la femme (CSF) has analyzed this policy statement from the standpoint of the integration and participation of women immigrants in Québec society. Indeed, while Québec women as a whole are often victims of discrimination, women immigrants experience even greater problems. Not only do many of them come from countries where women's rights differ from those of men, most women immigrants are admitted to the country as dependents of a spouse or a relative (and thus are considered dependent on the latter), which prevents them from having access to the same reception and integration programs available to male immigrants.

Considered dependents, women are often excluded from language training programs offered to immigrants intending to enter the work market. Many women are thus unable to express themselves in French. Moreover, as their occupational characteristics are not taken into account at the time of selection, women immigrants often have fewer chances of finding a job in their field. As a result, although Québec women born outside Canada are just as active on the labour market as other women, the conditions of their immigration lead to greater unemployment. This is particularly true in the initial years following their arrival.

The Conseil is also aware of the plight of "sponsored" immigrants, who have joined a family member already in the country. The current sponsorship system places this category of women immigrants in a state of total dependence as they are "under the responsibility" of the person already admitted to the country for a period of 10 years. The consequences of this dependence relationship are both numerous and major. In the case of separation or divorce, sponsored

women have limited entitlement to social aid (since 1987 only). They are not eligible for subsidized housing or the basic allowances provided for under federal language training programs.

The high concentration of women immigrants in job ghettos is also of concern to the Conseil: 30 % of women immigrants work in the manufacturing sector and of that number, 2/3 are active in the clothing sector. This phenomenon is partially attributable to their insufficient knowledge of French and to their lack of training.

Moreover, a significant proportion of women immigrants come to Québec as domestic workers: in 1989, 2,700 certificates were issued, 95% of which were for women mainly from the Philippines. The domestic worker recruitment program falls under temporary worker provisions. At the present time these persons enjoy less protection than other workers, when such protection applies.

Finally, women immigrants find themselves in a problematic situation regarding access to suitable housing; this is particularly true for members of visible minorities.

Already at a disadvantage from the economic standpoint and often the only person responsible for the care of their children, women immigrants must also cope with the racial prejudice of certain landlords.

The CSF notes that immigrants experience serious problems at the time of immigration (basic information, selection grid, sponsoring, etc.) and afterwards, in their integration into Québec society. At the immigration level, the Conseil mainly recommends:

- that the necessary measures be taken to inform all persons wishing to immigrate to Québec of the main characteristics of Québec, in particular regarding the rights and obligations of Quebecers as citizens and workers;

- that the current selection grid be revised and that the conditions for admission take into account the characteristics of the spouses of immigrants;

- that spouses and dependent children who immigrate be classified in the same category as the husband or the father, regardless of the time of immigration;

- that the length of the sponsorship be reduced from 10 to 3 years for the other members of the family and that the sponsored persons be properly informed of the consequences of the sponsorship;

- that the government make a special effort in the field of temporary immigration to insure that women domestic workers be properly informed of the Act respecting Labour Standards and of the recourses open to them, if need be.

As for the integration of immigrants, the Conseil mainly recommends:

- that the government offer all immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, equal access to integration measures;

- that the eligibility of women to French courses no longer depend on their immigration status and that the programs be better adapted to their occupational and family responsibilities;

- that host regions promote the setting up and development of woman immigrant groups;

- that actions in the field of professional training for immigrants be put forward and that greater use be made of the means to recognize their experience and academic training;

- and finally, that tangible measures be taken to insure that women immigrants have access to decent housing at a reasonable cost.